

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

ACDA-10 DHA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 /088 W

----- 077178

O 221943Z NOV 76

FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3761

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS GENEVA 9323

FROM WISNER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: RH, UK, PFOR

SUBJ: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: TIMES EDITORIAL NOV. 22

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF TIMES (LONDON) EDITORIAL ENTITLED
"RE-ENTER THE GOVERNOR OF RHODESIA," PUBLISHED NOV. 22.

BEGIN TEXT.

MR. IVOR RICHARD'S VISIT TO LONDON THIS WEEKEND EVIDENTLY
PRESAGES A CRITICAL CABINET DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE THAT
BRITAIN IS TO PLAY IN THE INTERIM PERIOD BEFORE RHODESIA
GETS ITS INDEPENDENCE AFTER AN ELECTION THAT INAUGURATES
BLACK MAJORITY RULE. AT GENEVA, THOUGH SOME HOPEFUL NOISES
HAVE BEEN MADE, THE DEADLOCK OVER THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
PERSISTS. THIS IS NOW ONLY THE OSTENSIBLE PROBLEM. THE
REAL PROBLEM IS HOW THE TRANSFER TO AN AFRICAN GOVERNMENT
IS TO BE EFFECTED.

THE AFRICANS HAVE PUT FORWARD NO ALTERNATIVES TO THE
KISSINGER PLAN, WHICH THEY REJECT. THIS IS NOT BECAUSE
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THEY HAVE NO ALTERNATIVES. THEY HAAVE MADE IT RE-

MORSELESSLY CLEAR DURING THE CONFERENCE THAT THEY WILL DEAL WITH BRITAIN ONLY. THE CONCLUSION MUST BE THAT BEHIND THE SCENES THEY ARE TELLING MR RICHARD THAT WHATEVER THE DURATION OF THE INTERIM WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO THEM IS THAT BRITAIN SHOULD PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN IT, AND THAT THE RHODESIAN FRONT, WITH MR SMITH AS ITS DETESTED SYMBOL AND LEADER, MUST BE DEPRIVED OF AUTHORITY.

THUS THE DECISION FROM WHICH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS FLINCHED CANNOT MUCH LONGER BE PUT OFF. IT IS, OF COURSE, THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE OF PREVIOUS BRITISH GOVERNMENTS' INSISTENCE THAT BRITAIN'S JURIDICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR RHODESIA REMAINS, AND THAT IN SOME FORM, BRITAIN MUST LEGISLATE FOR THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE. THE AFRICANS ARE NOW FILLING IN THIS BLANK CHEQUE. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DID NOT WANT TO BE DRAGGED INTO NEGOTIATIONS AS A PRINCIPAL, DID NOT WANT TO CHAIR THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, AND DOES NOT WANT TO MEET THE CHEQUE.

MR RICHARD EVIDENTLY CANNOT MAKE MUCH MORE PROGRESS UNLESS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AGREES TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY, IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE SMITH GOVERNMENT CAN BE SUPERSEDED AT AN EARLY DATE BY SOME BRITISH LEGISLATIVE ACT-OR ORDER IN COUNCIL-AND A BRITISH PRESENCE IS SUBSTITUTED. THAT SEEMS TO BE HIS MESSAGE, AND IT IS AN UNPALATABLE ONE. ONCE BRITAIN AGREES TO TAKE THE CHAIR IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WITH WHITE AND BLACK MEMBERS, THE KISSINGER PROPOSAL BECOMES MORE ACCEPTABLE AS A KIND OF GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP-IN-COMMITTEE, WHILE SOME SIMILAR SUB-COMMITTEE COULD (ON PAPER) TAKE OVER THE SECURITY PORTFOLIO IN THE BIRACIAL COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. THE COUNCIL IN PRINCIPLE IS NO PROBLEM AS IT IS TO HAVE A BLACK CHAIRMAN OR CHIEF MINISTER (THOUGH A BRITISH NOMINATION TO THAT OFFICE WOULD INCUR THE WRATH OF HIS DISAPPOINTED RIVALS--AND ENDURING AND VIOLENT RIVALRY).

IF BRITAIN WERE TO CONSENT TO THIS EXPOSED ROLE, THE AFRICANS MIGHT AGREE IN GENEVA THE DATES AND DETAILS OF THE ELECTION WHICH THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL-IN-COMMITTEE WOULD HAVE ONLY TO IMPLEMENT. INDEED THIS WOULD BE ESSENTIAL.
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THE TRANSFERENCE OF POWER WOULD HAVE TO BE BRIEF IN DURATION AND WORKING TO A CUT-AND-DRIED SET OF INSTRUCTIONS DERIVING THEIR AUTHORITY FROM GENEVA RATHER THAN FROM LONDON.

BUT THE INTRODUCTION OF SUCH A BRITISH PRESENCE REQUIRES THE FULFILMENT OF OTHER CONDITIONS. MR SMITH, HIS COLLEAGUES AND PARTY MACHINE MUST AGREE TO GO QUIETLY AND (PERHAPS

IN EXCHANGE FOR IMMUNITY) KEEP SILENT THEREAFTER. THE REST OF WHITE RHODESIA, BUT MORE PARTICULARLY THE SECURITY FORCES, MUST ACCEPT THE NEW COMPOSITE AUTHORITY.

THE OTHER CONDITION IS THAT THE AFRICAN LEADERS SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO BIND THE GUERRILLA LEADERSHIP TO THE AGREEMENT. OTHERWISE BRITAIN WOULD HAVE TO TAKE CHARGE OF AN ANTI-TERRORIST CAMPAIGN WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY ORGANIZING THE CIVIL TRANSFER OF POWER. BRITAIN'S AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE A TEMPORARY SOVEREIGN RESPONSIBILITY MUST AT LEAST BE SUBJECT TO A CLAUSE THAT IF ANY OF THE PARTICIPANTS MAKE THE EXERCISE OF THAT RESPONSIBILITY IMPOSSIBLE, THE ARRANGEMENT LAPSES--PERHAPS IN FAVOUR OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL. WHETHER BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY COULD JURIDICALLY SPEAKING BE REDUCED TO A LIMITED AGENCY CONTRACT WITH PENALTY AND WITHDRAWAL CLAUSES MAY DECIDE ITS PRACTICABILITY AS A WAY OF ENDING THE DEADLOCK. BUT TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE CONFERENCE AT THIS STAGE, THE UNWELCOME EXPLORATION OF SUCH AN INITIATIVE MAY BE FORCED ON THE GOVERNMENT. END TEXT.CATTO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, TEXT, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, INTERIM GOVERNMENT, PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GENEVA09323
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760434-0947
From: GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761127/aaaaawmh.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 AUG 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 AUG 2004 by castels>; APPROVED <24 NOV 2004 by powellba>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: TIMES EDITORIAL NOV. 22 FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF TIMES (LONDON) EDITORIAL ENTITLED "RE-ENTER THE GOVERNOR OF RHODESIA," PUBLISHED N OV
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK, (RICHARD, IVOR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006